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Chuang-lang, Ch'ing-yang, and East Kansu. The raids furnished to the invaders a considerable amount of loot and fostered their predatory instincts. The example set by the Mongols whetted the appetite for plunder among the Tibetan tribes also. The people lived in desperate conditions, and the t'u-ssu troops had always to be ready to comply with the orders of military commanders.

This note, recorded in the Lu chronicles, is quite acceptable for the reason that during just these years a tremendous confusion reigned in Mongolia, and the Mongol tribes located along the Kanchow and Liang-chow borders had nobody to care for them, for the Oirats, now at the summit of their power, had thought themselves strong enough to challenge the Chinese empire.

HEIGHT OF OIRAT HEGEMONY

To Esen, the powerful Oirat chief, had been promised an imperial princess by the eunuch Wang Chen, the favorite of the emperor. He had not notified the emperor of this promise and when the envoys of Esen arrived at court with the nuptial presents they were refused. In the autumn of 1449 the humiliated Esen began raids on the empire frontiers and approached Ta-t'ung. An army of half a million men was raised in a hurry, and sent against the Oirats. The emperor accompanied the army. His troops were routed, the emperor was taken prisoner, the remnants of the army tumbled back to Peking, and the capital was in jeopardy. Ching Ti, the brother of Emperor Ying Tsung, ascended the throne in 1450. The Oirats were unable to seize the capital. After endless deliberations, the released imperial prisoner reentered Peking in the eighth moon, after an absence of one year.

Esen, swollen with pride after his resounding victory over the empire, his ambition soaring to the throne, proclaimed himself emperor of the Mongols in 1454; but two of his commanders revolted against him in 1455, he fled and was killed the same year. For the time being the balance of political power of the Oirats shifted to the eastern Mongols who struggled again for the hegemony. One of the commanders who had killed Esen was killed by Polai, a tribal chieftain of the Ta-tan Mongols. Po-lai enthroned a new Khan, Markorgis, the son of T'o-to-pu-hua, known under the name of Hsiao-wang-tsu, the little king, and began with raids on the frontiers of the empire.[80]

In 1457 Emperor Ching Ti fell ill, the secluded Yin Tsung ascended the throne for the second time and thereafter his brother died.

T'U-SSU LI WEN

The same year T'u-ssu Li Wen arrived at Peking from Hsining with his army, to congratulate Yin Tsung

[80] H. Serruys, *op. cit.*, 85; Pokotilov, *op. cit.*, 58–60.

on his second ascension to the throne, and to present his offices in these times of troubles which beset the empire. He was promoted Tu-tu ch'ien-shih and somewhat later Yu-tu-tu, Governor of Tat'ung. Two thousand Mongols arrived and plundered the region of Wei-yuan. Li Wen defeated and pursued them. The emperor granted him the title of Duke of Kao Yang. In the autumn of 1460 the Mongol Polai started a raid on a large scale invading Yen-men-kuan and devastating the country. The officials in the capital grew very anxious. Li Wen, however, forbade his troops to move. He was committed to prison and deliberation concerning capital punishment was held. The emperor pardoned him, but he was stripped of his titles except that of tu-tu ch'ien-shih, and an opportunity was granted to redeem his honor by fighting the Mongols in the regions of Yenan and Suei-te (*Annals* of Kansu 42: 28*a*; *Annals* of Hsining 27: 11*b*).

What was the reason of the unusual behavior of Li Wen?

During the whole reign of Emperor Ching Ti (1450–1457) intrigues went on among the ambitious eunuchs and the most prominent officials, some of them friends and some of them foes of Emperor Ching Ti or of the secluded Emperor Yin Tsung. The factions seethed with hatred, accused and slandered each other, coveting the highest positions, wreaking ruin on their rivals. Many executions of high officials cast a blot in the reigns of Ching Ti and Yin Tsung.

General Shih Heng had defended for Emperor Ching Ti the capital beseiged by Esen in 1449. During the illness of Emperor Ching Ti, he hatched a plot preparing the dethronement of Ching Ti and the enthronement of Yin Tsung. Near Yin Tsung he accused his rivals and seven executions of the most prominent officials followed. He was bestowed with the title of Pilar of the empire. But a comet appeared in the sky. It was an ominous portent, indicating that the seven executions caused by Shih Heng were disapproved by Heaven. Shih Heng was committed to prison. Later during one of the brightest days it thundered terribly for a whole day, and one of the doorgates of the palace was smashed. Then deluging rains caused inundations in many provinces. Yin Tsung, at his wit's end, proclaimed an amnesty in 1458. Shih Heng could leave jail. In 1459 Shih Heng invited an astrologer to read his horoscope. The clever man guessing his client's meaning, predicted that in the Shih family an emperor would arise, founder of a new dynasty, but that he would have to act with the utmost caution. Shih Heng broke the news to his son, Shih Pien, for whom he had previously secured the office of Governor of Ta-t'ung. The young man, not cautious enough in his speech, let the secret leak out in Ta-t'ung. The officials of Ta-t'ung reported at court and judges arrived. Shih Pien poisoned himself. His father was committed to jail and ended his life in the same way. The officials of Ta-

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the Khoshot tribes (Oirats) went to Kokonor with his armies. He conquered Kokonor, Tsaidam and East Tibet, defeated the enemies of the Dalai Lama, occupied Lhasa and proclaimed in 1642 the Dalai Lama Nag-dbang bLo-bzang temporal and spiritual sovereign of Central Tibet.[85]

From 1597 until 1642 no events are recorded in either *Annals* concerning Huangchung. The country enjoyed a relative peace, while its borderlands still suffered raids from the same Mongols.

THE MONGUORS AND THE FALL OF THE MING DYNASTY

Desperate times were still in store for the Monguors and their t'u-ssu, and tremendous sacrifices were still requested from them to save the tottering dynasty, but the Monguors with their t'u-ssu stood loyal as a rock to the end.

The restless Mongol tribes had, during two and a half centuries, harrassed the dynasty, administering many crushing defeats to the armies, devastating the border provinces of the empire, and the neighborhood of the capital, causing the ruin and the revolt of the Tibetans, draining the resources of the empire and weakening the discipline of the armies and administrations. This sword of Damocles was still hanging over the dynasty when another ominous plague threatened the empire, the plague of brigands from inside the empire. The Ming dynasty was so effete her fall was imminent.

During the T'ien-ch'i period (1621–1627) Chinese brigands led by Li Tzu-ch'eng and Chang Hsien-chung ruthlessly murdered the people and savagely devastated the cities and villages, to the point that the exasperated Chinese population hoped for new rulers.[86]

According to the Lu chronicles, in 1628 a severe famine desolated the region of Yenan and Suei-te (Shensi), so many times plundered by Mongols during two and one-half centuries. Wang Chia-yun, a native of Fu-ku, stirred the starving people to band together and go plundering through the country. Li Tzu-ch'eng and Chang Hsien-chung, planning a revolution against the dynasty, seized the opportunity to organize the already plundering groups of brigands and realize their plan.

During 1628–1640 the revolution raged unchecked. The rumors spread like a prairie fire in Huangchung and North Kansu, and the population was frightened out of its wits, when the brigands poured from Hsi-an through the Kuan-chung pass toward Kansu.

In 1641 the old Hsining t'u-ssu Ch'i T'ing-chien (descendant of the Myriarch Kung-k'o-hsin-chi, founder of the Ch'i clan) and his two sons, Hsing-chu and P'ing-chu, invited to a secret convention to discuss

[85] Grousset, *op. cit.*, 603.

[86] Erich Hauer, Li Tzu-ch'eng and Chang Hsien-chung, Ein Beitrag zum Ende der Ming Dynasty, *Asia Major*, Vol. secundum fasc. 3/4: 436 sq., 1925.

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N *563 M 276 [372] men make their own pipes from the leg bone of a sheep. The smoking kit, a small pouch holding tobacco, a pinch of tinder and some small flints, hangs on the belt at the waist. The light is obtained by striking tinder against the flint.

c. Clothing

N *563 M 291 [177] The Mongours have always been proud of their national costume, though since the enrollment of some Chinese into their clans, a few communities have adopted Chinese clothing. During the rule of the Chinese Nationalist government, most of the Mongours kept their own costume. According to Father Schram, M [668] [177] who made a thorough investigation of the people, they were not allowed to wear the national costume after the Communists conquered their country in 1949. It is not known whether the Communists are continuing their policy of obliterating the distinct costumes and traditions of the small minorities.

M [171] The clothing of the Mongours is not greatly different from that of the Mongols. Traditionally, the men dress much less elaborately than the women. A man ordinarily wears a dark blue cotton gown, similar to that of the Chinese, that opens on the right side and hangs a little below the knees. The upper part of the gown is loose and a sash or belt is worn at the waist, making a copious pocket in which the man carries his eating bowl and various odds and ends. When working at home, a man wears a gown of roughly woven white wool. Festival gowns of the rich are of silk or satin, and a vest or sleeveless jacket is worn over the gown. The ordinary man wears a cotton gown and jacket for festive occasions, with a plain silk or cotton sash.

In the old days, men wore trousers only when they went to town. Now they regularly wear blue cotton trousers cut in the Chinese style, with the legs stuffed into their cloth-topped knee boots. The tops of dress boots are sometimes embroidered. In winter, leather boots are worn. Few Mongours wear undercloth-ing, and neither men nor women wear stockings.

M [301] Almost every young man wears a silver-plated bracelet carved with Chinese designs, and most men wear finger rings set with coral or turquoise.

The woman's gown is very full, has wide sleeves, and hangs to her heels. It overlaps in front, and buttons down the left side. An outer gown of coarse, unwashed wool is used as a working garment. Because of the natural oil in the wool, the gown sheds water well. A sash or girdle holds both gowns at the waist. Generally the poor do not wear trousers, the two gowns being their only garments.

N *563 M 292 Well-to-do women have elaborate and gaily colored festival dresses, fancy trousers and false sleeves. Like the Mongol women, they wear fancy headdresses and boots for dress occasions. At such times the outer gown is left off and the inner